

REMARKS

Entry of this amendment and reconsideration and allowance of this application, as amended, are respectfully requested.

The prior art grounds of rejection are respectfully traversed.

Claims 1, 8 and 14 are amended to more clearly distinguish Applicant's claimed combinations of features from the prior art. One key feature of Applicant's combinations is **not** using plasma at the time of the first exposing step. As a result of avoiding the use of plasma, damages caused to the barrier metal surface are eliminated. Further, the elimination of plasma provides simplification of the process vis a vis the prior art.

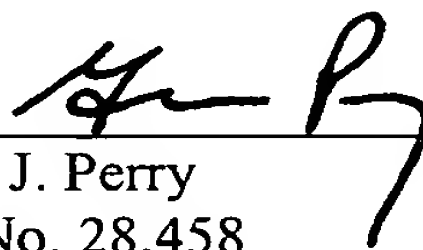
Hausmann uses plasma in the first exposure step, leading to inevitable damaging of the barrier metal surface. Using the Hausmann process the interface between the barrier metal layer and the Cu layer would be deteriorated as a result of incorporation of insert gas atoms.

Claim 8 has been amended claim 8 and claim 10 has been cancelled without prejudice.

We have added new claim 17 reciting the pressure for conducting the first exposure step. This particular pressure cannot be derived from Hausmann.

All outstanding matters having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in a condition for allowance and a Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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